

MIDWEEK

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Spinal injuries triple from last year

Cuts, dislocations, broken bones are surf related

By Jim Cresson
Cape Gazette staff

Spinal injuries on Delaware beaches are triple the number recorded last year, hospital officials say.

Other surf injuries, such as cuts, dislocations and broken bones, are more than dou-

ble last year's tallies, a Beebe Medical Center spokeswoman said.

At least one injury was serious, leaving a swimmer paralyzed, a local doctor said. As a result of the increased injuries, local beach patrols are considering new safety measures for next summer.

Swimmers who have been slammed by waves into the stone- and shell-littered surf break area have reported numerous cuts, scrapes and broken bones this summer.

Less numerous are swimmers reporting bruised or fractured spinal vertebrae, but such injuries are of far more concern to resort area beach patrols and health-care providers.

Beebe Medical Center Director of Public Relations Sharon Harmon said the total number of spinal injuries treated at the hospital as of Aug. 22 is 11, compared with just three spinal injuries last year.

Harmon said the hospital treated 238

other surf injuries, compared to 103 such injuries last summer.

A monthly breakdown of injuries shows that the vast majority of them – 223 cuts, scrapes and bone injuries and nine spinal injuries – occurred in July and August, after completion of the massive beach replenishment projects at both Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach. The projects greatly widened and raised the beaches, covering

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Dan Cook photo

Cape district students celebrate moving up

Class of 2009 freshman Chris McMahon patiently awaits his entree at the annual Cape Henlopen freshman picnic at the Ninth Grade Campus on Savannah Road. The high school also held a moving-up day for about 340 students who will be entering the sophomore class. Students and parents at the high school spent the day meeting teachers, administrators and trying to find the right classrooms. Classes begin Tuesday, Sept. 6, for all students in the Cape Henlopen School District. For more photos turn to page 14.

Maul named discipline czar at Cape High

By Jim Westhoff
Cape Gazette staff

A high school social studies teacher was named student services coordinator at the high school to handle discipline issues.

The Cape Henlopen School District Board of Education announced personnel changes at its Aug. 25 meeting. Robert Maull, who taught social studies last year at the high school, will be in charge of student discipline, handling classroom disruptions, fights, frequent tardiness, behavior contracts, and acting as a community liaison in discipline matters.



MAULL

High school Principal Ed Waples said dedicating one person to discipline issues will allow assistant principals and the principal to be instruction leaders.

Maull, 45, has been a teacher for 21 years, after graduating from Cape in 1978. During his 10 years teaching social studies at Seaford Middle School, Maull designed a behavior system and other programs for at-risk students.

Maull also made a presentation to the school board on a statewide task force on school violence, of which he is a member. Maull said the task force will bring together educators and community members to help solve the problem of violence in the schools. "We're hoping that this task force can help to minimize some of these issues,"

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Democrats gather for Jamboree; hear presidential hopeful Biden

By Henry J. Evans Jr.
Cape Gazette staff

Democrats gathered at their annual Jamboree in Cape Henlopen State Park, Aug. 27, to eat fried chicken and hot dogs, shake hands with party leaders and hear from the man who would be president if Delaware Democrats have a say.

More than 400 Democrats from throughout the state attended the event, said party officials.

The man people clearly wanted to hear from – Sen. Joe Biden – didn't disappoint the party faithful as he criticized the Bush administration's Iraq policy but explained that America shouldn't suddenly leave that country.

Gov. Ruth Ann Minner, Lt. Gov. John Carney, State Treasurer Jack Markell and State Insurance Commissioner Matt Denn all took turns at the microphone talking about recent party victories and the election challenges ahead.

After introducing his family, Biden quickly abandoned the undersized public address system, moved to the center of the pavilion, stood on a picnic table bench and used pure lungpower to address the crowd.

"Can you hear me better this way?" Biden asked as the crowd responded with enthusiastic applause.

"We have reason to be optimistic, as a party and as a nation. I know you're frus-

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Jim Westhoff p

At left, Tecola Gibbs and her son, Isaac Fairley, look over schedule for the incoming year during Coming Up Day 29 at Cape Henlopen High School where Isaac will be a sophomore. Students and parents spent the day meeting teachers and administrators and trying to find all the classrooms. All 340 students will be sophomores this year.

Above, Cape Henlopen High School Teacher Carrie Sern looks up some posters to get ready for the coming school year Aug. 29. In her second year at Cape, Sern will be teaching biology and dynamic universe.

Injuries

Continued from page 1

most jetties in Rehoboth Beach. And both projects resulted in sharp drops where the beach meets the ocean.

It is in that drop-off area that waves crash. And it is in that surf break zone that many people stand, waiting for a wave they can jump over or body surf. If they catch the wave, they are often pushed headfirst into the stone-littered shelf, where some have dislocated shoulders or fractured vertebrae. If they miss the wave, people are often slammed straight into the steep shore, where they get cut or scraped or break a bone on stones and broken shells.

Dr. Eric Gallagher, who has spent seven years working in Beebe Medical Center's emergency department, said he believes most of the spinal injuries this year occurred south of the newly replenished beaches, in the area of the Delaware Seashore State Park beaches around Indian River Inlet and in north Bethany Beach.

Gallagher said most of the spinal injuries were minor, requir-

ing only a short time to heal. But he said he was told that one victim suffered a serious injury that left him paralyzed, with no ability to move his arms or legs.

"That was probably the man who was airlifted off Indian Beach in July," said Dewey Beach Patrol Capt. Todd Fritchman. "I heard he was in real bad shape."

Because the name of the injured person was not available, the Cape Gazette could not confirm where the accident took place.

Fritchman said his lifeguards recognized in June that the surf break was the worst they'd seen.

"We definitely began telling visitors there should be no swimming in the surf-break zone," Fritchman said. "We can't reach everybody on the beach, but we have tried to advise people who look like first-timers at the beach. Over the winter, we will form a better plan for next summer in case the beach doesn't flatten out this winter."

Rehoboth Beach Patrol Capt. Kent Buckson said his guards are already eyeing ways to protect swimmers next summer.

"We can't do anything about the beach or the waves," Buckson said. "But we can make signs for

every beach access point in Rehoboth and have them up for next summer."

Buckson said that he, too, hopes the beach will flatten this winter and remove the hazard people have faced this summer.

"This was all uncharted water for us this year," Buckson said. "We didn't have time to guard the beach, respond to injuries and make signs this year, but we will during the winter."

Buckson said there are some good positives from the beach projects. The jetties are mostly covered and not producing rip currents, he said. And the beachfront is very straight, giving guards a clear view of the water and other lifeguard stands.